Jazz Has Remarkable History as a Fad

Starting Twenty Years Ago in New Orleans It Has Swept From Coast to Coast and Is Invading Europe—Exponents in Bitter Dispute as to Origin—Broadway Historian Settles Question

LORETTA McDERMOTT with FRISCO

ORIGINAL DIXIELAND JAZZ BAND

FRISCO, JAZZ STAR

Mr. Kingsley is the most profound authority on jazz, which has swept over this country and is now invading Europe. Maurice is now teaching the shimmy dance in Paris to jazz music to French pupils. Mr. Kingsley has interviewed every artist of the Keith circuits who might have been by way of picking up any information on the subject and they have brought back to the Palace Theatre much light on a topic that has mystified the lighter musical authorities. The importance of "jazz" may be understood from the degree to which it has supplanted the earlier and simpler syncopation we knew as ragtime.

By WALTER J. KINGSLEY.

"JAZZ" is a teasing, provocative monosyllable; it sets folks dancing, shimmying, swaying, finger snapping. The word has a rasp for the nerves that react in steps synchronizing with supersyncopation. Whence comes the noun "jazz" and the verb "to jazz"? What sublime genius of the lowest common denominator of music coined this pandemic term?

As head of the bureau of research of the B. F. Keith Vaudeville Circuit I have delved deeply into folk lore of the African west coast, the Mississippi delta, the Barbary coast and the Chicago underworld on the trail of jazz. In a previous article for THE SUN I described the primitive jazz music of the native African and the transplanted darkey of the plantations; I told how it crept up the levees from New Orleans and rode the bumpers east from San Francisco. It remains to tell the history of jazz since it became the musical paprika of a dance mad generation and, quitting the underworld, set out to rule the dance floors of public places and the ballrooms of private homes.

Twenty years ago a blind newsboy of New Orleans known to all the river city as "Stale Bread" mastered a few "blues" and "hesitations" and acquiring a fiddle from Al G. Fields's Minstrels set out to play his way into local fame on the street corners. He collected crowds and sold papers. One by one other newsboys with an ear for exotic rhythms and barbaric chords joined him until he had a band of five motley musicians which he christened "Stale Bread's Spasm Band" to the delight of New Orleans, whose inhabitants still consider "spasm music" a more pictorial and satisfying term than "jazz music."

Barred in Polite Place.

This was street music and the polite resorts of New Orleans would have none of it, though it flourished in the resorts of horizontals. This fact prejudiced fashionable New Orleans against the lawless music of "Stale Bread's Spasm Band." One gifted musician, John Spriccio, loved jazz for its own sake and revelling in "blues" and tricky syncopations he taught his violin pupils what we now call jazz long before it won a place in the sun. Now comes the daybreak of jazz.

In 1915 Bert Kelly was playing in the College Inn, Chicago, with an orchestra made up of himself, drums and director; Wheeler Wadsworth (now with Lucile Cavanagh), saxaphone; William Ahearn, U. S. A., piano, and Sam Baum, drummer. This quartet played "blues" and "hesitations" and quaint syncopated melodies, and were quite the craze in the night life of Chicago.

Thomas Meighan, the movie star, gave a party one night for movie folk and had the Kelly band for dance music. In the party were such famous folk as Emmy Wehlen, Julian Eltinge, Jeanne Eagels and Grace George. Motion pictures were taken by Richard Travers of Essanay, and on the film showing the musicians he placed a caption reading, "The Originators of Jazz." Thereafter it was the "Jazz Band," and the word has now invaded Europe. That party really started the countrywide vogue of jazz music. Kelly and his band are now playing for Frisco and making a musical hit of their own.

It was Raymond Lopez, now with Blossom Seeley, who first muted his cornet with a derby hat, and Tom Brown of New Orleans was the pioneer in using a hat on his trombone for effects. Jugs were tried by colored jazz artists, but were never adopted by white musicians, who declared them "honkytonk" and "no class." The slouchy jazz musician gets effects with a squealing saxophone and by playing off key. The three great clarinet players of jazz are "Yellow" Nunez at Reisenweber's, Gus Mueller, now in the army—he can play jazz in any key—and Lawrence Shields of the Dixieland Jazz Band. "Yellow" Nunez is the only man who can take his clarinet to pieces down to the mouthpiece and keep up with the band.

Bert Kelly is the jazz pioneer north of the Mason-Dixon line. He knows more about jazz than any man living outside of the famous jazz professor of New Orleans, John Spriccio, the veteran violinist. All the famous jazz artists in this country have imitated him or his pupils. He was playing jazz and "blues" a generation before they reached Chicago. Bert Kelly began with four men in his jazz band. He now has five and plays a banjo himself instead of a cornet, which instruments, in his words, "blatts too much."

Kelly and his "Frisco Four" were dubbed a "jazz band" in 1915, as already stated. In 1906 Brown's band from Dixieland came to Chicago direct from New Orleans. They knew all the old negro melodies, with the variations played by Spriccio, and once Kelly heard them he knew that jazz and "blues" were going to be popular, so he signed up clarinets and cornets who jazzed. This bunch from New Orleans played by ear entirely.

Dixieland Band in Town.

Harry Fitzgerald brought Brown's band from the Lambs Cafe, Chicago, to New York and tried them out all over town, but Broadway was not ready for them. They went into vaudeville as the Five Rubes and then broke up. Raymond Lopez, cornet, returned to Chicago and joined Kelly, but the others returned to New Orleans.

"Yellow" Nunez, who had been guitar player for John Spriccio, the daddy of jazz, brought the original Dixieland Jazz Band to Chicago in 1917. They played in more or less important resorts in Chicago in 1917, often appearing without coats and all shimmying. Max Hart brought them to Reisenweber's in New York, where they scored an instantaneous and lasting hit. They did phonograph records of their "Livery Stable Blues," which they had adapted from the "More Power Blues" and into which "Yellow" Nunez put breaks and pony calls and to which Trombone Edwards added neighing. All this, however, was derived from the New Orleans blacks and John Spriccio.

Nunez sold the number to Roger Graham. Larocca, the cornet of the band, claimed it and the case went to court. Judge Carpenter asked Nunez to define "blues," whereupon he made his famous reply:

"Judge, blues is blues."

The court held that "blues" could not be copyrighted, inasmuch as they could not be described and orchestrated. Kelly says that ragtime is not exact syncopation and "blues" are not exact harmony.

Jazz is mighty interesting. It stems from the African jungle via the slave ships and the plantations. Old John Spriccio of New Orleans knows all the music of the darkies, and some enterprising writer of popular melodies ought to visit him. He is responsible for jazz melodies and Bert Kelly originated the jazz band.

Inasmuch as the pioneers of jazz music are quarreling over credit to an extent that led the police to be called out recently in Harlem when two jazz bands met outside the stage door of the Alhambra Theatre, it is necessary to submit a sworn statement by Bert Kelly. This is exhibit A in the great musical controversy which is raging wherever jazz players meet:

"The phrase 'jazz band' was first used by Bert Kelly in Chicago in the fall of 1915 and was unknown in New Orleans. In March, 1916, the first New Orleans band of cornet, clarinet, trombone, drums and piano arrived in Chicago to play in the Lambs' Cafe; it was called 'Brown's Band from Dixieland.' The band was brought from New Orleans on recommendation of Frisco, who was then dancing in the Lambs' Cafe. [Note they did not use the 'jazz band.'] The band consisted of Tom Brown, trombone (now with Bert Kelly's Jazz Band); Raymond Lopez, cornet (now with Blossom Seeley); Gus Mueller, clarinet, United States Army; William Lambert, drums, United States Army.

"This was the first and by far the best band that ever came from New Orleans. Gus Mueller, clarinet player, joined Kelly in the spring of 1916 and was placed at White City, Chicago, with the following combination: Gus Mueller, clarinet; C. O. Brush, banjo; Fred Miller, saxophone; Jack O'Neill, piano, and Fred Oxenius, drums. At this time Harry James's meteoric career as a cafe manager was starting and he was in charge of the Boosters' Club in the Hotel Morrison, Chicago, and had a ladies' orchestra playing for his dancing.

First Advertisement of Jazz.

"Kelly approached him with a proposition to furnish him with better music, but he could not see Kelly's figures. Kelly advised James to raise his prices and print cards for his tables reading: 'On account of the big expenses of hiring Bert Kelly's Jazz Band for the entertainment of our patrons it has been necessary to raise the prices as follows:' &c.

"This was in the fall of 1916, and the band from White City was the first band ever to be advertised as a jazz band—it was a big success, and in the spring of 1917 James sent to New Orleans for the Original Dixieland Jazz Band and insisted upon their using the words 'jazz band.'

"This was in 1917, and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was the first New Orleans band to use the term, while Bert Kelly used it in 1915. Bert Kelly had about twenty orchestras known as Bert Kelly's Jazz Band, and when the Dixieland arrived they adopted their name of 'Original Dixieland Jazz Band.'"

A. J. Baquet, the "first and original" jazz clarinet player, is now at the Alamo Cafe in 125th street. He was born and raised in New Orleans and comes of French, Spanish and Indian ancestry. At the start of his career he played entirely by ear, but later learned to read music and took a course in classical music under Prof. Santo Juiffre. This enables him to develop more difficult syncopations and variations than do the players by ear alone. He has developed a school of jazz and clarinetists.

Baquet is a student of his art and enjoys a high standing among his fellow jazz artists. It is interesting to note how he works out the animal effect and imitations in "The Livery Stable Blues." He explains:

"The band makes a sudden stop or break in the second part of the number, the clarinet taking as a solo a rooster crow imitation, followed by a cornet solo, in regular dance tempo, imitating a horse neighing or pony calling. This is followed by a trombone solo imitating the mooing of a cow. Then the whole band falls in together."

Sophie Tucker's Share in It.

Sophie Tucker is an innovator in jazz music and it was she who first introduced shimmy dancing to New York. She did a shrug of the shoulders and a wriggle of the arms which might be called "polite shimmy" as compared to what passes current in cabarets nowadays.

Her instructions to the jazz band for effects with "Shimmy Blues," and "Another Good Man Gone Wrong," bid fair to be classics wherever drums, clarinets, cornets, saxophones and trombones mingle in the new music.

Collector "Big Bill" Edwards Pessimistic About Prohibition

Detection of Moonshiners in City Especially Difficult, but Raids Are Increasing and Force Must Expand

By WILLIAM H. EDWARDS.

HOW will the great city of New York with its cosmopolitan population, its pleasure seeking visitors, act when it is brought face to face with a condition of prohibition?

Already some of the best minds in the Government; the best minds in that body which brought about this revolutionary legislation—the Anti-Saloon League; the keenest minds of the liquor interests, and thousands of resourceful persons who say they will not be deprived of their liquor, are busily working.

Now that prohibition is about to become law, the Government minds are principally concerned with its enforcement. It is plain to be seen that in this situation the Government will have the complete aid of the Anti-Saloon League. Already this body, through its officers, admit that they are stunned at the tremendous task of enforcing the law. For 2,000 years or more liquor was to be had in the world. And it is admitted that the enforcement of the act will require superhuman work at the outset.

May Seek Full Enforcement.

It is hard to analyze what is going on in the minds of the men who manufacture liquor. Evidently they believe in the old legal bromide that the "surest way to obtain the repeal of an unpopular law is to enforce it to the letter." And from reports that are coming to me from confidential sources, this may be the final tack of the vast liquor interests.

Resourceful persons, I am told, are planning to have their liquor despite all the laws and law officers. There have been many ideas advanced, some serious and other bordering on the serio-comic. This office was told the other day of a plan of several wealthy men to incorporate and establish a club on one of the nearby islands within a day's sail of New York where they might go for week end trips to satisfy their yearning for the flowing bowl. There has been talk of anchoring several craft outside the three mile limit where all kinds of drinks might be had. Apparently there has been little secret made of the fact that the rich man and the man of moderate means who feels that he must have his liquor have laid in a stock to last them some years to come.

Of course there is no guarantee that this liquor will escape the scrutiny of the Government; for no doubt in the enforcement of the law Government agents will be given the right to search dwellings for liquor. That will probaby be one of the most drastic provisions and may be one of the hardest and most expensive to carry out.

While the loss in revenue to the United States will be tremendous—nearly half a billion having been collected in the country last year—it has been plain that for many years liquor has been declining in importance as a source of revenue.

New Revenue Sources Tapped.

New sources have been tapped. Of the total internal revenue collections in 1914, the individual and corporation income taxes constituted less than 16 per cent. In 1918 they constituted more than 80 per cent. Straight income taxes collected in 1914 were less than $61,000,000; in 1918 the collections were almost $3,000,000,000. Alcoholic beverages in 1914 yielded about 70 per cent. of the total tax. For 1918 collections from this source were not much more than 12 per cent. of the total levy.

"How has the law worked out in States where prohibition has obtained for several years?" was the question I put to one of the most expert revenue officers in my department, a man who was born in the mountainous districts of North Carolina, who mixed with and fought with moonshiners, who has given the best years of his life to the Government service, and who is as clever at nabbing the proprietor of a still in a basement in a congested tenement section of New York as he is in the Blue Ridge mountains of Virginia.

"It hasn't worked out," is what he said.

His statement to me (and Government reports bear him out) is to the effect that since North Carolina went dry there have been more blockaded stills than ever before in the history of that State. This applies to all States in the South, he says. A revenue agent at Atlanta, Ga., recently declared that in the brief time he had been there he had unearthed 856 illicit dealers. Many revenue officers had been killed, he declared, and it would take several regiments of soldiers completely to wipe out the stills.

Raids on illicit stills in New York city are becoming more frequent every day. This office has been informed, in anonymous communications, of several places where beer is being made in homes. With the limited men at our command it is nearly impossible to cover every section in the metropolitan area. Of course we can make an effort to minimize the making of beer, wines and liquors, but one of the leading revenue investigators told me the other day that there aren't enough revenue officers in the United States to stop completely the manufacture of liquor in New York city homes.

There have been a suspicious number of small "grocery stores" opened in basements. A grocery store gives a man the right to have the ingredients for liquor—sugar, grain, &c.—sent in. All he needs then is an ordinary stove and a weather eye open for the revenue men.

In the Southern stills principally grain is used, but this is hardly feasible here, because the grain might clog up the sewers and is easily traced. We have found in our raids on the city stills that the makers of illicit whiskey have used molasses, sugar, potato peelings, &c.

Ideas of Revenue Man.

Another revenue officer, a man who served his apprenticeship in the South and has led raids for several years in the heart of New York city, made this statement to me:

"Most of the killings of revenue officers in the South occur from an ambuscade. Revenue officers first locate the stills. They have maps drawn of every little country road to guide them. They have maps of two different routes. If they anticipate trouble on one road they take the other. Shooting is only done when the revenue officers are on their way to the still. Directly the moonshiners get sight of the revenue officers—they always have a lookout who gives the alarm—they take to their heels.

"Each revenue officer in the South is equipped with a Winchester repeating rifle, a .44 calibre revolver and an axe which resembles a tomahawk. The axe is used to smash the still into a million pieces. Most of the feuds in the South start in this way: A man without any money goes to a blockade still and asks for liquor on credit. Refused, he gets sore and tips off the revenue office. Hundreds of lives have been lost in these feuds. It frequently has happened that after a raid and a loss of life the chief blockade distiller would be made a revenue officer. Invariably this man, once with the Government, made the ideal one. He was loyal, had plenty of nerve and knew just where to locate the stills.

WILLIAM H. EDWARDS.
INTERNAL REVENUE COLLECTOR FOR NEW YORK.

Experience of Revenue Men in South Shows Jump in Illicit Distilling

"Locating a still in the mountains of the South is a great deal easier than locating one in the crowded sections of New York. As water is needed in the making of the whiskey stills in the South must be located on streams. As they have no way of hiding the waste they pour it out on the stream's bank and you can get the odor for two or three miles. Camping parties and travellers in the mountains sometimes have pleasant experiences. When they get the smell they 'hit the trail' (not the Billy Sunday trail!) and finally arrive at the still. After they have satisfied the illicit distillers that they are not revenue officers the mountaineers are the finest entertainers in the world.

Tried to Run Them Out.

"When I was a young fellow, with several others I started on a camping trip in the mountains of North Carolina. At nightfall on the first day we pitched our tents in a remote section of the mountains. We had hardly settled ourselves when a determined looking fellow came to us and said that we would have to clear out. It developed that we were in the immediate vicinity of a still. We were alarmed and we sent word back that we intended to stay all night and if the morning didn't show a 'pretty day'—meaning good weather for moving camp—we would stay there until it was a 'pretty day.' We weren't bothered. Of course that was some years before I became a revenue officer. To-day the mountains are dotted with stills.

"I find it a great deal harder to discover a still in New York than in the South. It is like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. There are just two ways of finding one in the city. One is through a tip to or by the police and the other is by smell. With the many odors in the congested sections of New York the scent is not as keen as it is in the pure air of the Southern mountains. In the mountains a still may be spotted by the smoke rising in the air. Of course there is no such clue to the city still."

Small Stills on Sale.

What might be called small stills, but are not used for the manufacture of liquor, are on sale in many places in New York. They are used by drug manufacturers. To-day, however, you cannot buy one without registering the purchase. I suppose there will be still more drastic regulations for the sale of these outfits when the prohibition law is in its final shape for enforcement.

Reports coming to this office from all parts of the country are to the effect that many persons are engaged in the manufacture of miniature stills for the home. Indeed, some of them are advertised.

While the term illicit distilling seems to find a particular application in the South, this office has been informed that in the country districts in the immediate vicinity of the metropolis—that is to say, on Long Island, in Connecticut and New Jersey, and in the districts up State—there daily are springing up plenty of methods of "beating the law." Take the manufacture of wine, for instance. It is so easy for any person to take a quantity of grapes into the cellar of the little house, squeeze them, and let nature take its course. Every farmer knows how easy it is to make applejack brandy.

Obviously the literal enforcement of the prohibition law is sure to be a great job. How it is going to work out time alone will tell. While it looks as if the days of the corner saloons and cafes are doomed, no one at all informed will hazard a guess that absolute prohibition will be in force the way the law is supposed to go into effect.